

I oppose media concentration!

This is a copy of a letter I sent to Mr. Powell. I would appreciate your consideration of it in your decisions. Thank you.

Dear Mr. Powell,

I want you to know I disagree very much with your idea of easing the media ownership rules. I am a conservative person, but what you are proposing is not in the public interest and WILL NOT provide greater alternatives and options for services or improve the quality of services offered by the media.

I have worked in the media industry (radio and TV) and know first hand what happens when stations own multiple outlets in one area. It is a profit windfall for the stations and an injustice for competitive and unbiased reporting. Stations can virtually monopolize a particular area forcing advertising rates up to unreasonable levels and forcing businesses to advertise to choose "packages" regardless of what they really want or need. If a client does not want that "package" then they don't get to advertise, period. Since those stations control the market, that means the clients have alternative media outlet of that type to turn to for a choice.

In addition, it stifles competition among stations. I have first hand experience with this in the area where I now live. A large media corporation formed (Clear Channel Broadcasting) and bought most of the stations in town, at least one in each format. They have done this in many, if not most of the other markets in the country. Since they have a large corporate financial backing and can force advertising in "package" deals or not at all, other stations in those formats have been forced out of business or to change formats, or have simply gone out of business.

This hurts us as listeners. We don't get a choice of stations with different formats, programming and media services. We have to listen to the same choice of music from the same music sources and music services as all the other stations in that corporation. The alternatives are the same regardless of where you turn in the market. No longer is the station interested in serving the public interest. We no longer see a station that responds to the community and its needs or wants. It is about how much money can be charged to make the corporate bottom line look good for that division. It also means that we get one slant on news (news reporting is not as "unbiased" as the media would like us to believe, unfortunately), one source for weather and sports, etc. It means that programming is dictated to us by these companies based on their profit potential to the corporation or the corporate ideals rather than what we as the public want to see and hear. Don't forget, they can and do pool money from the corporation and can do what they want in a market regardless. If you disagree, you have no choice because there is nothing else. One or two companies control it all.

As another example, there is a morning announcer on a morning show on KBRQ (one of 6 Clear Channel stations here) that is absolutely grotesque at times on the air. He regularly does things on the air that are rude, lewd and what I would consider unprofessional. It is done in the name of having fun and being funny. He has even put down persons and groups on the air. I voiced my concern to him first and he rationalized and gave excuses for his actions saying some people appreciated that kind of show. I voiced my concern to the station manager. Nothing was done. That is

the only classic rock station in town. I do not listen to them anymore and instead listen to a small independent station 40 miles away or another larger station 100 miles away (when I can pick them up.) This is because, that station is now not responsive to the community as they had been before Clear Channel bought them.

Additionally, we used to have contests on the local stations and were competing against other local listeners for phone contests, etc. Now, with Clear Channel, we must compete in nationwide contests trying to be the 25th nationwide caller instead of the 15th local caller. We are competing against hundreds of thousands if not millions of persons instead of a few thousand. I don't even try anymore because it is useless and a waste of my time.

If companies are allowed to own most if not all radio, TV newspapers in a particular area, there will cease to be competition and alternatives. We do not need that. It has already happened in Internet Service Providers. Cable companies, broadcast companies and ISP's have been bought out and now rates and services are all the same with no competition to force innovation or service upgrades. If you don't like the service you get or if it is bad, you have no choice. It is either take it the way they want to offer it or do without.

You have publicly stated that the laws are outdated and old. On the contrary, they are very timely and applicable. They were put into place to encourage competition, insure that services would be constantly developing changing and meeting the needs and wants of the public from a variety of sources, not just one, as you would not have it. It prevented the media companies from forcing rates and services upon a public without choices or alternatives. Please keep in mind that rules and guidelines don't have to be "new" to be good, beneficial, timely and appropriate. Sometimes the old rules are very good like they are and offer a perspective from many years of use, experience and tweaking to benefit us the public and are in our best interest, not what is best for the corporate bank account.

In summation, I strongly urge you to rethink your position. I think you need to look at this in greater detail and study what the consequences of your actions are going to be. It does not appear that this has been done. If so, I think you would agree that the changes you are proposing are detrimental to the public at large and will only insure that the corporations get more control and more money while we get less alternatives, options, pay higher prices, and have less quality in the service we do get. I would be interested in talking with you or any public official responsible for this matter.

Thank you.

Jimmy Summers

P.S. I will also leave the following in this message as I generally agree and support it, along with my letter above.

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, the Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In promoting its supposed goals of fair competition, diversity and local voice in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of the huge, dominant companies and players in the broadcast industry.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate, or even attempt to demonstrate, the negative effects that media deregulation and consolidation have had on the diversity of our media. While there may indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented has been severely limited.

The right to conduct an informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was renewed in the marketplace of diverse ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge and consolidate further, our ability to have an open, informed discussion from a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

I urge the FCC to preserve the public interest by keeping the media ownership rules in question intact.

Also, I support the FCC's plan to hold a public hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA in February of 2003. I strongly encourage the Commission to hold similar hearings in all parts of the country and solicit the widest possible participation from the public. The rarified, lawyerly atmosphere of an FCC rulemaking is not an appropriate decision-making venue when questions as profound as the freedom of our media are at stake. I encourage the Commissioners to come out and meet some of the people who do not have a financial interest in this issue, but a social interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is important that the Commission take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Thank you,

Jimmy Summers

NOTE - Please do not add my contact information to any mailing or contact lists. I am not interested in any unrequested e-mail/SPAM. There is a big enough problem with this already. That is a more pressing and important matter I would encourage our officials to act upon. Thank you.